

Chancellorsville  
N.W. Cor Ely Ford & Old Plank Road  
Spotsylvania County, Virginia

HABS No. VA-77

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VA  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. VA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Philip N. Stern, District Officer  
Fredericksburg, Virginia.

"CHANCELLORSVILLE"

N. W. Cor. Ely Ford & Old Plank Rd., Spotsylvania County, Virginia

Owner. Mr. J. H. Rowley.

Date of Erection. circa 1825.

Architect. Unknown.

Builder. Alexander Loreman, Baltimore.

Present Condition. Ruin.

Number of Stories. Two.

Materials of Construction: Brick.

Other Existing Records: Harpers' Pictorial History of the Great  
Rebellion, page 497.

Additional Data: (See following pages)

## CHANCELLORSVILLE

### History

Chancellorsville is the name of a fine house that was built in the second quarter of the 19th century and whose ruins now stand in Spotsylvania County near Fredericksburg at the northwest corner of the Old Plank and Ely Ford Roads. This statement is based on the testimony of the architectural remains and the history of the Chancellor family as related by Mrs. Vespasian Chancellor, who is a direct descendant of the original owner. The house was built by Alexander Loreman of Baltimore, for his niece Anne Lyon, who was the widow of George Chancellor. The place was originally operated as an inn for the Plank Road which ran through the estate.

During the War Between the States one of the fiercest engagements between the forces of Hooker and Jackson took place in the proximity of Chancellorsville and was thereafter called the Battle of Chancellorsville.

This building was the headquarters of General Hooker and as such received the brunt of the offensive fire of the Confederate Batteries which eventually resulted in its destruction. Part of the house has since this time been twice rebuilt, and twice destroyed by fire. Neither of these later buildings could be termed a restoration, only adaptation of the ruins to fill the needs of its new owner. The walls of approximately one-fifth of the original structure now stand as a monument to the history in which it played so important a part.

### Observations Relative to the Architecture

The Plan: Refer to H.A.B.S. drawings of Chancellorsville, Sheet No. I.

Mrs. Vespasian Chancellor described the house as approximately 126 feet in front, with a depth (including east wing) of 62 feet. The foundations as excavated show the dimensions to be 106 feet by 55 feet. By including the cellar entrance-ways, the true front dimension could be increased to 116 feet. The foundations of the narrow wing directly behind the front steps are built of brick bats, are not bonded at northwest corner with the adjacent wall, are 13 inch walls and have been pointed differently from the rest of the original building. These facts would indicate a later origin. The 9 inch foundation walls to the extreme east have been erected since 1926 by the present owner. This recent work unfortunately obliterated traces of chimney foundations which would have proved very valuable in a conjectural restoration.

The entire central section and the two flanking wings, excepting the northeast ell, were apparently excavated and the basements so formed probably used as service dependencies since none of the post war photographs show more than one isolated outbuilding. The presence of

ample fireplaces and large windows confirm the theory that the basements were an important part of the house.

In an interview on July 9, 1935, with Mrs. Vespasian Chancellor, who was 18 years old at the time the house was destroyed, but who remembers some features quite clearly, the following information was obtained; quote: "Chancellorsville was a big house of 28 rooms-- it was brick, two stories high with one long wing on the east end running at right angles with the house. The entrance hall was in the center of the lower front porch and ran to the rear of the house where there was a smaller porch. The front porch was two stories high. On the right of the hall near the entrance door was a door that led into the gentlemen's parlor, a very large room, and on the left another door led into the ladies' parlor. Next to the ladies' parlor, in the west end of the house, was the post office, and west of this another very large room which was used as a bedroom or a family sitting room at different times.

At the rear of the long wing on the east end which extended at right angles from the building was the kitchen and in the southeast corner of the front wing was the dining room.<sup>1</sup>

A hall led from the main entrance hall along the building to the east, and another hall from this ran down the wing referred to. In the center, or about the center of this wing, another short hall led to a door facing the east and steps which led outside this wing. There was a cellar under the house where I and several others stayed during the Battle of Chancellorsville until the house caught fire and we were escorted to the rear of the Union lines. When the house was burned, it was destroyed almost completely to the ground. The only part left standing after the battle was part of the northwest corner of the west end of the house. About 1890 a Battlefield Park Association restored the west and central wings of the house. The east wing and rear ell were never rebuilt. My painting of the house is exactly as I remember it and my memory of it is very clear," end of quote.

1 In an earlier interview, Mrs. Chancellor located the dining room as next to kitchen. She believes this latter information is more authentic, however.